

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CONSERVATORS OF
ASHDOWN FOREST HELD AT THE ASHDOWN FOREST CENTRE, WYCH
CROSS ON MONDAY 22 MARCH 1999 AT 2.30 pm.**

Present: Mr D C Cumming (in the Chair), Air Marshall Sir Frederick Sowrey,
Mrs D M Bagshawe, Mrs S Stokes, Dr H D V Prendergast,
Messrs D H O Allen, L J Gillham, D L Hall, T R May, A G Reid,
M Skilton, F W J Whetstone, A N White.

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the public present. He then announced that Ranger John Linton had died on 18 March after a short illness. Ranger Linton had been an Ashdown Forest Ranger for thirty three years. His depth of knowledge of the Forest was unsurpassed and his experience of Forest matters will be greatly missed. The Board stood for a minute's silence.

ITEM 1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Miss McPherson, Messrs RIF Parsons and R M Thornely-Taylor.

ITEM 2 To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd November 1998

2.1 The Minutes of the last Meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by the Chairman. The Minutes were then approved and signed as an accurate record.

ITEM 3 Matters arising

3.1 Foxhunting on Ashdown Forest

3.1.1 Mr Skilton stated that he had received a large amount of correspondence and telephone calls from people who wanted the Board to ban foxhunting on Ashdown Forest. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties, he thought this reflected the concern felt amongst the general public. He then moved the following motion:

“The Conservators resolve that:

- i) Pending the completion of a full consultation exercise, any licences permitting foxhunting on land in the Forest under the management of the Conservators be temporarily withdrawn to ensure there is no prejudice to the statutory duties of the Conservators as set out in the Ashdown Forest Act 1974 to:
 - a) conserve the Forest as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty;
 - b) conserve fauna and flora;
- ii) The matter be reviewed as soon as the consultation exercise has been completed.”

3.1.2 The Chairman said that the Board had unanimously agreed a course of action at their meeting in November and that a resolution could not be changed within 6 months without the

agreement of the majority of the Board. He then asked the Board if they wished to consider the motion by a show of hands. The Board declined by 10 votes to 2.

ITEM 4 Report on the Commoners' Annual General Meeting

4.1 Mr Allen briefed the Board on the Commoners' AGM held on 5 March. 139 people attended the meeting. All five Commoner Conservators were present. The meeting was chaired by Mr Terry Pentith. Mr Philip Glyn, a Commoner, and Mr Alan Morriss, a non-Commoner, stood for election. Mr Philip Glyn was elected by 99 votes to 27 to serve on the Board from 1 April 1999 for a period of five years.

4.2 Mr White had presented a report on the Forest's finances for the year 1997/98. He had outlined the difficulties within the Stewardship Scheme that arose through the impact of inflation and the reasons for the proposed deficit. He had also presented the new Forest Rate and the Commoners' had unanimously agreed an increase of 4.2%.

4.3 The Chairman of the Board had presented his report, concentrating on the two issues that had been of particular concern to the Board over the past year.

- i) He had briefed the meeting on the foxhunting issue to date,
- ii) He had reported the Police were now able to enforce the speed restrictions on the Forest roads following the painting of more roundels on the roads. He had understood that 6 warnings had been given to date and there were some prosecutions pending.

4.4 The Forest Superintendent had given his report on Forest matters with the help of slides. He reviewed the grazing project and the impact of people on the Forest. He had given a brief description of the routine work carried out over the past year, paying particular attention to the impact of the warm wet winter. Finally he had reviewed the many benefits of the Forest.

4.5 The meeting had then been opened for questions. Questions on the cutting of trees around Forest Car Parks, the presence of Ragwort and the number of deer were answered by members of the Board, the Forest Superintendent and Mr Alan Morriss.

4.6 Finally, Mr Allen had thanked Sir Frederick Sowrey for his dedicated work on the Forest's behalf.

ITEM 5 To receive the Minutes of the Conservation Committee Meeting held on 25 January 1999

5.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr Gillham.

5.2 Funding for conservation work Mr Skilton reported that East Sussex County Council acknowledge the breadth of work carried out by Forest staff and appreciate the good relations with the Board. Whereas there had been a blanket reduction of 1.5% across most Departments, funding for the Conservators would be maintained at the current level although this represented a cut in funds in real terms.

5.3 Riding on the Forest Mr May asked for how long riding had been suspended. The Clerk reported that the Forest had been closed to riding for two weeks in January. Due to the

difficulties horse riders experienced on some of the Forest roads, he aimed to close the Forest for the minimum of time, keeping the riding state at “Walk only” for as long as possible.

5.4 English Nature funding Dr Prendergast asked if English Nature had offered any extra grant this year. The Clerk reported that he was aware that extra funds may be available but he had had no details to date. He had received an agreement from English Nature to fund some work by BTCV during 1999/00.

There being no further questions, Mr Gillham moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 6 To receive the Minutes of the Roads, Planning & Amenities Committee Meeting held on 15 February 1999

6.1 The Minutes of the last meeting, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mrs Stokes.

6.2 Mrs Stokes expressed her appreciation for the advice and support given by Ranger Linton to the Roads, Planning and Amenities Committee. His depth of experience had been greatly valued. She also acknowledged the advice and support of Sir Frederick Sowrey.

6.3 Marden’s Hill Incinerator The Clerk reported that the Planning Application Appeal had been unsuccessful.

6.4 Fox hunting The Clerk reported that he had heard nothing to date following the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of the County Council despite having asked for the Minutes. Mr May said he would look into the matter.

6.5 Management Protocol Mr May asked when the Management Protocol would be ready for the Board. The Clerk said that Conservation and Roads, Planning & Amenities Committees had received the first draft of the sections dealing with their subjects for consideration but the Finance and General Purposes Committee would be considering their section at their next meeting. It was anticipated that the Board would be able to consider the whole Management Protocol by the end of 1999.

6.6 Manorial Waste Dr Prendergast asked which areas of Manorial Waste were managed by the Board. The Clerk advised him that there were 18 parcels of Manorial Waste that are managed by the Board and invited him to view the maps kept at the Ashdown Forest Centre.

6.7 Road markings at Lampool Mr Reid asked if any comments had been received on the new road markings at Lampool. The Clerk reported that some anxiety over the relocation of the cats eyes had been expressed at the Commoners’ AGM. He reminded the Board that it had been suggested two years ago that such a scheme should be tried on the C3, but this had not been taken up. Mr White reported that the new road markings had had no influence on the speed of traffic further up the hill towards Duddleswell.

6.8 Remuneration for Millbrook Car Parks Mr Reid asked if the County Council paid any remuneration for the car parks on Millbrook Hill. The Clerk replied that nothing was received specifically for the car parks.

6.9 Forest Row Pavilion The Clerk reported that he had passed on the Committee’s comments to Forest Row Parish Council. He understood that the Parish Council thought the

Conservators may be persuaded to give more land for parking in the future. Mr Whetstone felt it was unrealistic to anticipate problems with finance that may arise in 30 years time. Mr Allen said that, whilst he supported the scheme wholeheartedly, in his experience problems could arise in 5 years and a sound business plan was essential if it was to be a success. Mr Gillham reminded the Board that local residents had opposed expansion of the car parks in the area and there was already heavy pressure on surrounding local tracks. The Parish Council should be aware it was unlikely any further Forest land will be given in the future.

6.10 Wrens Warren development Mr Whetstone felt the Board should be aware that the current property owner has planning permission for a wide variety of activities on the site, all of which are not active at the moment. Should the development not receive planning permission, the site could become more active with the accompanying increase in traffic.

There being no further questions, Mrs Stokes moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 7 To receive the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 1 March 1999

7.1 The Minutes, which had been previously circulated, were presented by Mr White.

7.2 The Board noted and endorsed the Committee's decision taken during the illness of John Linton, that a Ranger covering the additional duty week should be paid £20 per night for doing the extra duties and receive two days' pay (£80) for the weekend duty. It was agreed that this particular arrangement would last only until the fourth Chase Ranger had been appointed.

7.3 Review of Forest Income Mr White invited any member of the Board to attend the "brainstorming" session planned for Monday 19 July 1999.

7.4 Education at the Forest Centre Mrs Stokes asked if an Education Charity would fund long term education. Sir Frederick Sowrey briefed the Board on the project. Legally, a Charitable Trust would have to be set up at "arms length" from the Conservators. This would eventually become self supporting if the proposed plans were instigated.

There being no further questions, Mr White moved the adoption of the Minutes. This was agreed.

ITEM 8 Clerk to report on sundry matters

8.1 The Clerk drew the Board's attention to the list of guided walks on heathland and woodland management arranged for the Volunteers. He indicated that any member of the Board would be welcome to attend.

ITEM 9 Any other business

9.1 Dr Prendergast asked if there had been any feedback following the implementation of the Ashdown Forest “page” on the Internet. The Clerk said that he had no information on the number of times the site had been visited nor on the number of times the Minutes had been asked for at Crowborough Library.

9.2 The Chairman thanked Sir Frederick Sowrey for his 15 years support of the Forest as a Conservator. His drive and innovative approach to Forest issues had been much appreciated. Sir Frederick replied that he had found his time on the Board wonderfully stimulating.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chairman _____
28 June 1999

Clerk _____